1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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Silwa

BIRTH, INFANCY AND EARLY TRAINING

[844] [843] or from a visit, to give birth without undue pain. However, immediately the birth-pangs are felt, close female relatives are called upon, and soon the house teems with other women coming to offer their help. It should be mentioned here that while during pregnancy the husband's relatives [843] are expected to show more interest than the wife's, the actual event of birth is one of the obligations of the matrilineal side. It is natural that in the case of the first-born child the event of birth is attended to by the [591] mother and her relatives, as the woman is still in her matrilocal residence. If she has left it for any reason, she usually moves back to her mother's home to be attended to there, or the mother would be immediately called upon if her daughter is in her husband's house.

Thirty years ago the village had no official midwife (dayah), but since then a certificated woman has been responsible for deliveries. It is the members of the same family, however, who have been performing the functions of midwifery. The profession of a midwife is not a coveted one, as the midwife must be a woman 'who cannot be shamed'.[1] Like very old women, the midwife is a 'mukabila' who can meet men face to face, talk [834] to any man and walk in the streets without hiding her face. This might be also explained by the fact that the midwife is a woman engaged in an 'unclean' task, for a woman who is giving birth is considered to be 'unclean'. Yet in some cases the midwife is not called upon for birth, especially if a qualified woman exists in the family.

For delivery, the pregnant woman is seated on three stones, a proverbial position for anxiety and pain as expressed in the common saying 'Like a woman sitting on the stones'. The mother usually supports the back, while two other women each hold a leg and another two hold the outstretched arms. The usual birth-pangs are accompanied by requests of help from saints, especially 'Assayid al Badawi' who is the recognized saint to be called upon to 'widen the straits'. The after-birth is thrown out at night 'to be eaten by the dogs', the purpose fathering a wish that the woman would bear as many children as the bitch bears puppies—(dogs ● [825] being known for their proliferousness).[2]

The child's first cry is interpreted as his reaction to his coming from 'the wide to the narrow'.[3] He is immediately swaddled in old washed clothes belonging to the father or mother. The mother's jewellery, which had been taken off before delivery, is now put beside the child, as a gesture that the mother is no longer a mere bride (in the case of the first child), but [851] a mother whose child is more valuable to her than her jewels. In the case of a boy, other objects are put alongside, such as scissors and a sheathed

[1] It is perhaps because of her duty, the sex taboo is not enjoined upon her.

[2] For the belief in the importance of the placenta as a survival of the ancient Egyptian belief, see Seligman, 'Ancient Egyptian Beliefs in Modern Egypt', in *Essays and Studies presented to William Ridgeway*, Cambridge University Press, 1913, pp. 451–2.

[3] The women villagers' explanation seems to be in line with what some psychoanalysts call the 'birth-trauma'.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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THE AIMS AND METHODS OF SOCIALIZATION IN SILWA

Parents also scare their children by threatening them with dangerous creatures like scorpions and snakes. They scold them by saying: 'May you be bitten by a scorpion or a snake.' Apart from the fact that such scolding may be taken as a warning against the danger of such creatures, it is considered as a frightening threat to the children. Some children told me that they would prefer their parents swearing at them by the snake rather than by the scorpion. They told me that the reason for their hatred of the scorpion is that it was a wicked creature, which stings ruthlessly and indiscriminately, whereas the snake bites only when it is provoked. An older lad present remarked that the scorpion is the enemy of Moslems. He related that once upon a time a snake curled round a man's leg and yet nothing dangerous happened to the man; then a scorpion passed by and bit both the snake and the man, and caused their deaths. In the same gathering of boys, one of them told me that he actually saw the 'silowa' passing by him while he was sleeping near the harvest. He went on to say that after it had quenched its thrist, it gave a terrifying sound before going to its dwelling in the hills.

During childhood the instilling of fear is one of the expedients that parents constantly use to repress their children and make them docile. Yet I noticed that older boys, as well as adults, were highly ashamed of admitting fear of anything; to be courageous like a lion is the sign of a daring male, while for a girl, timidity is not a defective trait. One might suggest, in the light of Bateson and Mead's findings in Bali, that the horrifying mythical images of 'silowa' and 'ghool' are a cultural projection of the ambivalent feeling towards the parents, the 'silowa' symbolizing the mother, and the 'ghool' representing the father. Parents are thus represented as being both loving and affectionate as well as frightening and devouring.[1] Children also tell the story of the enticing man who comes to them while asleep, wakes them up, offers them dates, and leads them to an unknown world in the mountains. During the journey he reiterates that the child's mother is in front of him, and whenever the child asks about his mother he is always told that she is waiting at a short distance ahead. Thus the enticing man, by taking the children away from their homes, devours them when he feels secure.

Fear responses were quite striking during the Rorschach testing of the children as revealed by the frequent occurrence of responses such as 'silowa', 'ghool', 'scorpion', 'snake', 'wolf', 'fire', and 'blood', many of which do not actually match the blots chosen.

Moreover in the dreams of both boys and girls, the manifestations of fear, repression, and anxiety cannot escape one's notice, however one interprets these dreams. In boys' dreams, one comes across images of a child afraid of the village barber cutting off his head, the ground on which the boy is lying sinking down, a boy being chased by older people, another boy being stung by a scorpion and his family wailing for him, and so on,

[1] See also Chapter VIII on 'Children's Tales'.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN'S PLAY AND GAMES

A descriptive account of play situations and games will be given, starting with the play of young children and followed by that of the older.

Young children, from three to five years, are often taken outside the house by their older brothers and sisters (more often by their sisters) who are expected to look after them. They spend most of their time watching the older children playing, and they tend to ape their movements. One often sees a three-year-old, for instance, jumping about, running from one wall to another, or throwing its hands and feet about in movements similar to those of its elders. They can also be heard trying to reproduce the words and cries uttered by the others during the course of their play. Boys from four to six take great delight in playing the engine game. They line up in one row holding each other by the back. As they go forward with quick pace, they start puffing and whistling and trying to hit those who are in their way. One also sees boys of four and five standing in a row playing the game of 'Who urinates furthest?', or urinating on the sand and watching their urine as it makes a stream of water.[1] This is usually played in the absence of any adult spectators.

This age group accompanied by their older sisters takes great interest in any flight of birds, especially in the case of 'Wad el sheikh'—Ibis—which is supposed to be the fellah's friend, for it eats the worms which harm the soil and the crop. On seeing the birds overhead, the young children will twirl round and round, while their sisters clap their hands or drum rhythmically on pieces of tin. They sing together: 'Oh son of Sheikh. Give me a little loaf. Or I shall tell uncle Omara, who will beat his drum.' The children in their little song are actually asking the birds for help, threatening them, in case of failure, to tell uncle to scare them off.

All the organized games from the age of six are entirely for either boys or girls, for mixing between the two sexes never occurs in such games. In spite of the fact that certain games are preferred by younger boys, while others are played more by older boys, there is always that mingling of children of this age group (six to twelve) to a varying degree. For instance, there would be one or two older boys taking the leading part in a game mostly played by young boys.

1. One of the games which is mainly played by boys between five and eight is called 'The game of the mouse' (Li'abat al-far). A group of boys builds a heap of sand or dust around which they sit. The oldest boy is the leader and remains in control throughout the game. He calls out 'The mouse has entered', at the same time inserting his index finger into the heap, and the others immediately do likewise. When he calls out 'The mouse has come out' everyone must withdraw his finger. Any delay in responding to the leader's instructions exposes the child to hits on the body from his playmates till the leader orders them to stop.

[1] See Margaret Lowenfeld, *Play in Childhood*, London, 1935, pp. 114–23, for children's play connected with the experience of urination and defaecation.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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to be specialists in transmitting to others the religious knowledge of the Holy Book and the pious ancestors. The oral means of communicating and committing to memory the accumulated experiences is the best guide for perpetuating the group's tradition. It is not surprising, then, that old people are considered as knowing more than the young, and that, on these grounds, they are worthy of respect and obedience. The young have to wait many years before they can wield the same prestige and authority, for the instruments of wisdom may only be acquired through the passage of time. It is not unusual to hear people who wish to assert their position or to impress others with their views saying: 'I am a man who has witnessed both the pre-Islamic (jahiliya) and Islamic eras.'[1]

Good memory is certainly a great asset and indeed highly valued in Silwa, and the person with a good memory is usually described as the one with 'the full head'. The ability to remember names, places, events, and genealogies enhances the person's popularity and makes his participation and consultation desirable in social activities. The emphasis on memory training is impressed on the child as early as its efforts to learn to talk. Mothers utter a few words for the child to repeat, and then ask it to go round to all those who may be present, and say these words to each in turn, and this is recognized as the best method for the teaching of language. One of the favourite amusements of adults with children is to test the latter in reciting the names of their families in genealogical order. Very frequently, however, the adults may purposely interject incorrect names to mislead the children. Some children between the age of three and four, on being asked by the writer to recite their family names, would tell him as many as four or five of their names (the first name, followed by the father's name, the grandfather's, the great-grandfather's and so on).[2] In a symbolical way, the mother encourages the child to eat pigeon's head, as it is believed that this will foster the child's alertness of memory in later years of life.

It would be very difficult to determine here to what extent the importance laid on memory and memorization has been the product of the Islamic view of learning. It should be mentioned, however, in this connection that knowledge, for the Moslem scholars, was not so much a reaching out to the unknown (research), as it was a mechanical process of amassing the 'known'; the known being eternal and given, is unchangeable. Thus the acquisition of information and the deduction from accepted premises were the most important methods of knowledge.[3] A learned man

[1] This is, of course, an artificial claim such as the English expression, 'I don't know him from Adam'. The historical sense amongst the villagers, especially the older generation, is mainly thought of in the partition between the two eras, the pre-Islamic and the Islamic.

[2] It must be pointed out that in Silwa, or for that matter in Egypt as a whole, there is no system of first names and surnames. In Silwa, every person is always called by his first name. Unfamiliarity or respect requires only the addition of the title 'sheikh' in front of the first name.

[3] H. A. R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam*, pp. 64–6.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

CHAPTER I

EGYPTIAN VILLAGES AND THEIR INHABITANTS

THE natural barriers of Egypt (Fig. 1) have enabled the inhabitants, particularly those of the upper country, to live in comparative isolation throughout the whole of their history. On the north side lies the sea, along the east and west sides stretch vast, almost waterless deserts, while to the south ingress by way of the Nile is impeded by a series of cataracts. Their geographical isolation has doubtless been responsible for the characteristic conservatism of the Egyptian peasants. This conservatism is particularly apparent in their religious and social customs and their commoner industries, which, as will be more especially seen in the final chapter, have remained almost, if not entirely, unchanged from Pharaonic times.

The vast solitudes of the deserts are terrifying to the country folk, most of whom, up to the present day, cannot be induced to traverse even the lower fringes of those wastes after sunset (see Fig. 2). Fear of hyenas, and, still more, fear of *'afārīt*,[1] forbids any man to venture beyond the cultivation at night. The ordinary peasant, unless he is obliged to remain in the fields either to protect his crops or to watch over his sheep and goats, returns to his village before sunset, remaining there until just before the dawn of the following day.

The deserts have proved themselves valuable defences against invasion, the peoples who conquered the country at different periods of its history having usually entered it from the north-east. These invaders do not seem to have left any very marked impression on the physical aspect of the Upper Egyptians at any rate; most of these still bear a striking facial resemblance to the ancient inhabitants of the land whom we see depicted on the walls of the temples and tomb-chapels and in the portrait-statues of the Old,

[1] See Chapter XIV.

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

such a charm from the neck, the charm-case hanging under the right arm. I am told that a small piece of the placenta is sometimes used in this way instead of the cord, but so far I have not come across this usage myself.

Another method employed to prolong a child's life is the following. If a Muslim woman has had several children who have all died in early infancy, when another is born she asks a Coptic woman to give her *barakeh* (blessing, good luck), in order that the newly born child may live. The *barakeh* she asks for is either a part of a dress which has been worn by the Coptic woman or her husband, or else a dress which has belonged to one of their children. The dress *must* be that of a Christian, not of a Muslim. Among the Copts this custom does not exist. I asked why a Muslim should ask for the dress of a Christian, and I was told it was because they are good people.

A woman who has lost several children and wishes to ensure that the newly born infant will live acts as follows. She carries her baby in her arms, and, with a basket made of palm-leaves on her head,[1] goes from house to house begging for *ḥaseneh* (charity) for her child. She will do this however rich she may be, behaving as if she were a very poor woman. Some people may give her money, others *battaw* or *khubz* (two kinds of bread) and other articles of food. She will then distribute these gifts among the poor people of the village, even if she be as poor as they. She believes that, as the result of this action, God, or her *ḳarīneh*, will allow her to keep her child.

On many different occasions women have brought their babies to me with the request that I would spit into their mouths, in order to give them *barakeh* and make them live long! Also I found that many of my old clothes that I had thrown away were torn up, and small pieces of them given to various mothers in the village, who hung them on their babies as charms to prolong life. One expectant mother came and begged me to let her have one of my old frocks, in order that her child might be born on to it! She, poor thing, did not get her request granted, and I regret to say that her baby died very soon after birth!

Some women kill a puppy at the seventh month of their pregnancy. The puppy is killed over a cloth, on to which the blood flows. As soon as the child is born it is wrapped in this blood-

[1] The ordinary basket, called *maḥlaf*.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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843 stained cloth. When the puppy is killed its head is cut off and
789 is pickled in salt, and it is worn by the expectant mother till
825 after the birth of the child, when it is transferred from her to the infant. My informant, a clever, well-educated Egyptian lady, told me that this is done because dogs are regarded as very unclean animals in Egypt, and that therefore the mother's *ḳarîneh* would not come near her unborn child so long as she was wearing the puppy's head; and for the same reason the child will not be attacked or injured by its mother's *ḳarîneh* while it wears this charm.

794 816

789 Another protective charm, worn by an expectant mother if all
843 her children have died before they have attained the age of seven
761 years, consists of the head of a hoopoo, a *ḍufr*[1] of a snake, a small
825 piece of the under lip and of the ear of a dead donkey, a *nâb* (double tooth) of a camel, a *ḥirbâyeh* (chameleon), and a written charm. All these are hung under her right arm while she is pregnant. After her confinement the child wears these charms.

I saw a set of these charms which had been worn by a woman during the last two months of her pregnancy, only in addition to the above-mentioned articles there were seven threads of silk, which may be of any colour. While the expectant mother was wearing these charms they were divided into two packets, each done up in cotton material. When I saw them they had been transferred to her child, and had all been put together into a raw hide case. The child must wear this until death, and it is supposed to ensure it a long life.

It is the custom in many parts of Egypt for a mother to wear an iron anklet if she has lost all, or most of, her children; or one of her surviving children may wear the iron anklet, which, it is believed, will protect the next child that is born. The photograph (Fig. 31) shows two such anklets which I obtained from villages in Middle and Upper Egypt.

845 If a woman has arrived at the time for her delivery, and she
825 suffers much, but cannot give birth, she may sometimes crawl under the body of a camel seven times backward and forward, after which performance the child is born. The woman crawls from side to side of the camel, so I was told, not between its hind-legs.

If a birth is delayed for three days, and the woman is in constant pain, her husband must wash his right heel and she must drink

[1] The word means 'nail' or 'claw,' but here, perhaps, a 'horn' of a cerastes.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

minutes after the death of the person to whom it belongs. Another explanation of falling stars is that they are darts aimed by God at unbelievers. Lane says[1] that they are believed to be darts thrown by God at evil *ginn*, usually called *ʿafārīt*.

Certain precautions must be taken by a woman after she has given birth to a child. A woman who has lately lost her baby must not enter the room where a woman is being confined, nor for seven days after this event. If this taboo is broken the woman who was last confined will have no milk for her baby.

If a cat gives birth to kittens which all die, and a woman gives birth to a child in the same house in which the cat had its kittens, the cat must be taken away from the house or the baby may die. Or, if it lives, the mother will have no milk.

Near a small village in Asyūṭ Province there is a stone, roughly conical in shape, standing in the fields, and surrounded by whatever crops are being cultivated on that spot. It is said that men have often tried to dig it up, excavating to a considerable depth all round it, but no one has ever been able to come to the bottom of the stone. It is believed by the peasants to be very ancient. A certain mystery is attached to it because of these beliefs, thereby doubtless enhancing its magical value. Women who have not enough milk with which to nurse their children visit this stone on a Friday. They must not speak when coming to and going away from the spot, and they should step over it, still preserving absolute silence, seven times. After this, it is believed, they will have no difficulty in suckling their infant. I was told that the stone has been visited for this purpose, among others, for a hundred years or more.

If a woman or child brings meat to a house where there is a woman who has a child under seven days old that person must not go into the mother's room, but the latter must come out of her room and step over the meat three times. If she does not do this she will have no milk.

When a woman who is a Christian, whether Copt, Protestant, or of any other denomination, has given birth to a child her relatives take some wheat flour and mix it with water. Out of this dough they make several crosses, sticking them on the walls of the room occupied by the mother and child. The greatest

[1] *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1871), vol. i, p. 273.

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

I suggest that it may possibly be a way of emphasizing the fact 852
that the boy has now definitely joined the male community by undergoing this operation, and that therefore he is no longer under the control of his mother and her female relatives. This is a pure guess, and is brought forward only as a possible explanation of this somewhat curious custom.

It is a common belief all over Egypt that the souls of twins 774
when they have passed babyhood often leave their bodies at night 835
and enter the bodies of cats. These animals, therefore, are usually 845
very kindly treated. The following stories were told me in connexion with this belief, and my informant declared that they were true and that he knew the people concerned.

In a small village in Asyūṭ Province there was a boy who was one of twins, his twin, however, being dead. One night a cat came to a house and clambered on to the flat roof, upon which were some [251]
of the usual mud granaries. Some *kishk*, which is made of wheat [262]
mixed with milk, dried in the sun, and then cut up, was stored in [574]
one of these receptacles. It is often offered to visitors as a great delicacy. The cat knocked the lid off the granary which contained the *kishk*, jumped into it, and began to eat some of the contents. A member of the household happened to go on to the roof, and, seeing the granary uncovered, immediately put the lid on it without noticing that the cat was inside. It remained covered for three days, keeping the cat a prisoner. During this period the boy men- 753
tioned above remained motionless and unconscious on his bed, his 774
soul being in the body of the imprisoned cat. 845

After the third day some visitors arrived at the house where was the granary in question, and one of the family went to get some of the *kishk* out of it to offer the guests. When the lid was removed the cat jumped out and ran away. Immediately after this the soul of the twin returned to his body, and he rose from his bed quite well.

One evening a cat in whose body the soul of a twin happened to be temporarily incarnate was struck on the head by a woman. On the following day the twin in question came to this woman and accused her of striking him the previous night, pointing out to her exactly where she had hit him, and complaining that the blow had caused him considerable pain.

If a cat is killed while the soul of a twin is in its body the twin 761
dies also. For this reason cats are rarely killed. 774
835
845

FERTILITY RITES

Women also come here if they are experiencing difficulty in suckling their children, and donkeys which are not producing sufficient milk for their young are likewise driven here. The ceremony is the same as that for childlessness, and after its performance the milk is supposed to be much increased in quantity.

Many years ago my brother, Dr A. M. Blackman, recorded a custom of hanging skins of foxes over the doors of houses in Lower Nubia.[1] On inquiry he found that they were believed to be charms "to protect the women of the household, preventing miscarriages, and helping them in labour." In some parts of Egypt if a mother wants another child she will attach a small piece of fox's skin to the head of her last-born living child. After doing this she hopes that her wish will be granted.

The pollen of a male palm is used as a charm to produce fertility; some of it is mixed in water, which is drunk by the woman who wishes to have a child. The fertilization of the female palm with such pollen might naturally account for the belief in its efficacy as a charm to cure a woman of barrenness.

It is believed that if a woman who has lately had a child goes to see another woman who has recently given birth to a child which did not survive, the latter will not conceive again. The happy mother whose child lives must wait until her friend's child has been dead for fifteen days, when all danger of seeing her will be over. However, should such an unfortunate visit be paid before the fifteen days have expired, the bereaved mother must counteract the danger of future childlessness by visiting the tomb of her dead child and going through the ceremony of stepping over its body already described. She may as an alternative choose one of the other rites for the same purpose.

I will now describe some of the methods employed to prevent conception. One I have mentioned already in connexion with the stones in and beside the pool. If an expectant mother wishes to have no more children for a certain period she will take the seeds of a castor-oil plant and, on the day after her child is born, she will eat one of the seeds if she wishes to be without another child for one year, two if for two years, and so on. This is believed to be invariably effective. If a woman has a spite against another who wishes to have a child she may secretly insert some castor-oil seeds into her food, and so render her unable to conceive.

[1] *Man*, vol. ix (1909), pp. 9 f.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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ghost of the deceased away from the village. I am told that it is merely the way of making it known that a death has taken place.

When the corpse has been washed it is wrapped in cotton or silk cloths, the first wrapping being usually white, the outer green. Green is the sacred colour among Muslims, being associated with the Prophet Muḥammed. His descendants, or perhaps I should say those who lay claim to be such, very often wear a green turban.

FIG. 50. WOMEN WAILING OUTSIDE AN ENGINE-HOUSE, WHERE A BOY HAD JUST BEEN KILLED

Note the uplifted arms of the dead boy's mother, in the centre, a characteristic attitude of grief. See below, p. 236, and Fig. 137.

The Muslims do not bury in coffins. The corpse, when wrapped, is laid on a bier with low sides, and this is covered with a shawl by way of a pall. The sex of the deceased is indicated by slight differences in the draping of the shawl

When a man or a woman dies a ram must be killed and some of its blood sprinkled on the place where the death occurred. If this is not done the *rōḥ* (soul) will remain in the house and cannot go to heaven. If the people are too poor to afford a ram a kid is killed instead. When the father of a rich man whom I know died a ram and some other animals were killed at the house, and, in addition, a camel was slaughtered near his grave and the meat distributed among the poor

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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DEATH AND FUNERARY CEREMONIES

The clothes which the man or woman wore when he or she died must be washed, and then a *fiḳīh* comes and recites passages from the Ḳorān, having the clothes close to him and one of his hands resting on them. He also recites over the place where the person died. If these precautions are not taken the *rōḥ* of the dead person cannot leave the house. When a child dies a hen is killed instead of an animal, the rest of the procedure being the same as on the occasion of the death of an older person.

I have given this information as it was repeated to me, but I

FIG. 51. STRING OF WAILING WOMEN IN A FUNERAL PROCESSION

fancy that it is really the *ʿafrīt* of the dead person that is meant in this statement, not the *rōḥ*, which is the soul, the *ʿafrīt* being the ghost, and quite separate from the *rōḥ*, according to the popular belief.[1]

The corpse is borne to the grave by four male bearers, who are constantly changed during the procession to the cemetery, for to assist in thus carrying the dead is considered a pious act, and he who performs it thereby acquires considerable merit. The funeral procession is headed by men, those who are relations walking as near as possible to the bier. Immediately behind the bier walk the female mourners (Fig. 51), their faces, hands, and arms dyed blue, and their heads, breasts, and arms plastered with mud; they hold handkerchiefs, usually blue or black, and sometimes green, which they wave in the air as they give vent to their piercing

[1] See below, pp. 237 ff.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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DEATH AND FUNERARY CEREMONIES

F 769 775

That the souls of the dead come to the cemeteries is again shown in the following belief. I have been told by two or three of my village friends that when the people go to visit the cemetery, and they see a number of small green birds near the graves, they believe that these birds are the souls of the dead who lie buried there.[1] Lane says that "Souls of martyrs (*shuhadā*) reside in the crops of green birds, which eat of the fruits of Paradise and drink of its rivers." This is the belief as he heard it. It was definitely stated to me that the green birds *are* the souls of the dead.

F [825]

F 764 765 784

There are certain taboos on mourners, two of which are the following. If a person, male or female, has attended a funeral and walked in the procession, or even only gone part of the way, he or she must not enter the house where a woman has a baby under seven days old, for this will cause the mother to have no milk. Such a person must inform the mother of the child that he desires to enter her house, and she must then go outside to meet the visitor, who can then come into it without any evil consequences.

F 765 753 784

Again, no such mourner must enter a house in which there is some one suffering from sore eyes, for in that case the sufferer will lose his or her sight. Such intending visitors must wait outside the house, and the man or woman who has sore eyes must come out and meet them there first, and then they can enter without danger.

F C 764

The death and funeral rites of the Copts are in many respects very similar to those of the Muslims.

The following incidents were witnessed by me several years ago when I was staying in a small village in Fayûm Province, and this account of what I actually saw will best describe the ceremonies incident to the death and burial of a Copt. It must always be remembered that these are accounts of death and funeral rites as practised by the peasants only, and that they are not meant to be a description of the ceremonies which take place among educated people on similar occasions.

F C [492]

Early one morning a visitor brought to the house where I was staying the news of the death of a poor but much respected Copt who lived in an adjacent village. It was suggested that his relations and friends would much appreciate a visit from me, so I started off on my donkey as soon as possible after the sad tidings had reached me. It was not long before I arrived at the house of

[1] *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1871), vol. i, p. 83.

SUPERSTITIONS

F 755 [825] 776 774

Sheep are regarded as very gentle animals, and are supposed on that account to be watched over by angels, who, on hearing the child cry, will drive away the mother's *ḳarīneh*, who has caused the illness by clutching at the child's throat.

If a boy or child under eight years of age cannot walk the mother believes that her *ḳarīneh* has sent an *ʿafrīt* into the child. To cure this infirmity she calls in a neighbour to help her. The mother seats the child on the ground, and places in its lap a number of dates and some *kishk*. The neighbour and child then go to the mosque, taking the dates and *kishk* with them. Friday is a favourite day for such a visit, and they arrange to arrive at noon, when the men are praying inside the building. The woman leaves the child seated outside the doorway, and herself retires to a short distance. When the people begin to come out of the mosque they see the dates and the *kishk* spread out on the child's dress, and they all scramble to get their share of them. This frightens the child, and it begins to scream. On hearing its cries the woman who brought it to the mosque goes and takes it up in her arms and carries it home.

F [753]

It is believed that the screams of the frightened child will scare away the *ʿafrīt* in its legs, and that after this it will be able to walk.

Christians employ the same cure for their children who are similarly affected, and, be it noted, take them to the mosque, not to the church. An old acquaintance of mine, who is a Copt, told me that a child of his was at one time unable to walk, but that it could do so after thus visiting the village mosque. He added that he had taken the child to several doctors in Cairo and Asyūṭ, but that they had been unable to do it any good!

F C 755 753 776 774

In a large town in Upper Egypt there are two mosques, in both of which there is an ancient pillar. People who are ill with jaundice go to either of these mosques and lick the pillar, and then, so I am informed, speedily recover. I visited one of the mosques and at once detected the ancient pillar, which stands in the main part of the building among the other pillars supporting the roof.

F 755 778

In Egypt, as in many other countries, hair-cuttings and -combings and nail-parings are carefully kept, for if anyone else obtained possession of them he would, by their means, be able to gain an influence over, and so injure, the original owners. Bones from which the meat has been eaten, skins of fruit, and the like are also, for the same reason, either carefully buried or burned in a fire.

F 754

ʿAFĀRĪT

years of age, who used to be a village guard. He told a friend of mine that he knew that the ground on which the *ʿomdeh's* engine now stands used to be the haunt of *ʿafārīt*, for, when doing patrols at night round the outskirts of the village, he had sometimes seen on that spot a plough pulled by oxen and driven by a man, or sometimes a threshing-machine with the oxen and their driver, all made of fire. As this guard approached them he would cross himself, whereupon the *ʿafārīt* who had assumed these forms would disappear.

If a woman fears that *ʿafārīt* are in her house she puts a *ḳulleh* of water on the floor of one of the rooms, and near it she places some bread and salt, leaving them in this position during the night. This protects the whole house, and effectually prevents any *ʿafārīt* from entering it.

Nightmare and sleepwalking are supposed to be caused by *ʿafārīt*, and if a child suffers from either of these complaints it is a sign that an *ʿafrīt* has entered its body. This may have happened because the child has done something wrong; perhaps, so it was suggested to me, it had plucked some of the ears of corn from a field belonging to a neighbour. If a Coptic child sleepwalks or has nightmare its parents call in a priest, who tells them to bring seven *ḳanādīl* (old-fashioned saucer-lamps, with floating wicks). The priest then asks for a jar of water, and prays seven special prayers, burning incense meanwhile in a censer. As he finishes one prayer he puts out one lamp, after a second prayer a second lamp, and so on, till all the prayers are said and all the lamps extinguished. He now tells the parents to place the jar of water on the roof of the house, where it must remain for one night. On the following morning the child is bathed in the water, after which, it is believed, he will be cured.

Among the Muslims if a child is affected in this way the parents go to a magician, who writes a charm of protection for the child to wear.

In addition to his soul (*rōḥ*) every human being is believed to possess an *ʿafrīt* which leaves his body at death. In certain circumstances it may be a menace to any person who comes near it. Animals also have an *ʿafrīt*. This belief especially attracted my attention recently. A little dog which had been badly injured took refuge in the bathroom of my house. My servant told me that he was sure it could not live, and that, before it died, he must

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

remove it, or its *ʿafrīt* would for ever haunt the house. As it was a hopeless case I gave my servant a revolver and told him to shoot the dog. This he did, but he first took it away to a more distant spot.

While I was in Egypt in 1925 a poor man who came to trade in the village in which I was staying was drowned. He had gone to the Baḥr el-Yūsuf canal to perform his ablutions before his morning prayers, but the water was deeper than he thought, and he was unable to swim. No one was near at the time, it being very early in the morning. As he did not return people went down to the canal to look for him, and found his clothes on the bank. A large crowd collected, but nothing was done till early in the afternoon. The officials had been informed of the accident, but no doubt more pressing business detained them, and in any case they had to come from some distance. I went down and mixed with the crowd. The man's wife, mother, and little son were standing close to the water's edge, accompanied by numbers of sympathizers. The women were gesticulating and wailing, as they always do after a death, and were waving the blue and black handkerchiefs used on such occasions. "O my father! O camel of the house!"[1] they cried. A boat was manned by two or three men with a line, to which large fishing-hooks were attached, by means of which they hoped to hook up the body. They had been searching one portion of the canal in this way for some time, with no result, when I suggested that they should try another part, in the direction of which the current was flowing. They followed my advice, and very soon found the body. It was placed on the shore and immediately surrounded by a large crowd, which, after some time, dispersed, and then I saw the mother and wife of the dead man, one seated at the head and the other at the feet. I was strongly reminded of the ancient representations of Isis and Nephthys bewailing the dead Osiris. After this accident I was told by some of the villagers that no woman would go alone to fill her water-jar at that spot for fear of the drowned man's *ʿafrīt*, which would always remain in the water. It might be a good *ʿafrīt*, and then it would do no injury; but—who could tell?—it might be bad!

A few years ago some women in a neighbouring village had gone

[1] The camel, being a beast of burden and a means of livelihood among the peasants, typifies the breadwinner of the family.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

On pp. 189 f., 193 ff., 198, 229, 232, and 237 I speak of incense being burned, and of water being sometimes simultaneously poured out as well (p. 229), during the recitation of spells by a magician. As we learn from existing copies of the ancient Egyptian funerary liturgy and from the reliefs and paintings depicting its performance, incense was burned and water poured out at stated intervals during the recitation by the lector of the formulæ appropriate to the various episodes of which this liturgy was composed.[1]

On pp. 192 ff. I describe how a magician brought a woman from a distant village to the room in which he recited the spell summoning her. Similarly, we read in *The Second Tale of Khamuas* that an Ethiopian sorcerer brought the Egyptian Pharaoh from Egypt to Ethiopia and back again to Egypt, all in the space of six hours, and that an Egyptian magician retaliated by bringing the viceroy of Ethiopia to Egypt and back again to Ethiopia in the same space of time.[2]

Wax figures such as those mentioned on p. 197 were also used for sinister purposes in ancient Egypt.[3]

Superstitions about the evil eye evidently existed in ancient Egypt, but references to them are very rare in the literature, as has been pointed out by Dr A. H. Gardiner.[4] However, in the library of the temple of Horus at Edfu there was a book containing "spells for driving away the evil eye," and in a well-known hymn to Thōth dating from the New Kingdom occur the words: "O Thōth, if thou wilt be to me a champion, I will not fear the eye."[5]

In connexion with the statement on p. 224 that horns of sheep and other animals are hung over doors as a charm against the evil eye, a passage in the *Pyramid Texts* might be quoted which describes how the door admitting to the royal pyramid precincts was adorned with bucrania and "sealed with two evil eyes, that Osiris may come not in this his evil coming."[6]

On p. 236 I speak of the slaying of a victim on the threshold

[1] See, *e.g.*, A. M. Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir*, Part I, Pl. X; Part II, Pl. X, p. 20; Part III, Pls. XXI ff., pp. 29 ff.

[2] F. Ll. Griffith, *Stories of the High Priests*, pp. 55 ff..

[3] A. Erman and H. Ranke, *op. cit.*, p. 407; see also J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records*, vol. iv, p. 209, §§ 454 f.; *A History of Egypt* (London, 1906), p. 498.

[4] *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, vol. xxxviii, p. 128.

[5] A. Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 306.

[6] J. H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, p. 26; K. Sethe, *Die altägyptischen Pyramidentexte*, §§ 1266 f.

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

and every female child a brother (*akhkh*);[1] and since the sister loves her brother, this Jinn sister tries to destroy her real brother so that she may enjoy his love. And that is why whenever a mother curses her son she says to him *Ḥabbatak ukhtak* (*may your sister love you*).[2] The only object in cauterizing the child, or scarifying his head with a razor, is to punish him so that his sister may have pity on him and betake herself to her lover among the Jinn that he may leave him to them. Another group assert that " the Mother of Screeching " [*Umm Kuwaiḳ*] (i.e. the owl) was in former times a human being, and had a child with whom she was once enraged, so that she beat him so violently and painfully that he died. Then Allah punished her for that, for He changed her from human to animal form, and she has ever since so remained, enraged against the human race from which she was driven out [p. 50], and whose ruin she is constantly endeavouring to bring about, in that at sunset she passes above children, spreading her wings over them and smiting them with this disease. Some people say that one day a certain holy man struck the owl on the head with his hand to make it cease injuring people, but it would not be corrected, and that the black lines on her head are the marks of the fingers of that good man after the blow.

This practice resembles what the people of the Times of Ignorance[3] used to believe long ago in regard to the *Hāma* (a kind of owl), that when the blood of any slain person remained unavenged, there went out from his brow a *Hāma* which kept on screaming out : " Give me to drink of the slayer's blood." As the poet says :

" Oh, 'Amr neglect not my protecting and my wrong, else will I beat thee till the owl cry, ' Give me to drink.' "

[1] [Miss Blackman, *op. cit.* pp. 74–75, is seemingly wrong when she states that there is no brother (*akhkh*). Tr.]

[2] [This is another instance of the extensive belief in the *Ḳarīna* (see above p. 44). Dr. Klunzinger (formerly physician at Kosseir on the Red Sea coast) in his work, *Upper Egypt, its People and its Products* (London, 1878), deals with popular medicine on pp. 397–400. On. p. 383 he writes, " Even in the official registers of deaths kept by the physicians the *ḳarīna* was till lately a regular variety of disease, exactly corresponding to our convulsions." Tr.]

[3] [The *Jāhiliya*, or Pre-Islamic days. cf. *Acts of the Apostles*, xvii, 30. Tr.]

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

832 378 is sure of success, but this success does not materialize unless at the moment when the person is on the brink of the grave, and in the stages of poisoning for which they are no effectual remedies.

XLVI

THE "BEAD" OF THE COW (KHARZAT-AL-BAḲARA)

378 825 SOME women assert, and butchers agree with them, that there is in the neck or bellies of some cattle a piece of suet which has a wonderful property of producing fat in emaciated women, and so they go to extremes to obtain it. The butchers vie with one another in enhancing its price until on occasion it has reached ten guineas.

832 We cannot imagine what idea drove the ladies to run after this goal, for beauty does not call for size and fatness. It is enough for a woman that she be healthy and of good deportment. It is all one to her husband whether she be bursting with fat or slender-waisted. The truth is, health is not gained by fatness, but fat is generally one of the accompaniments of health.

But if we grant that health follows fat, who will prove that the "bead" of the cow, which has acquired this wonderful fame, has the least effect? I understand that Kaufmann the German, goes so far as to say that the "bead" of the cow, famous [p. 92] among the women of Cairo, is nothing but the chyme[1] of cattle.

And if his investigation of this subject is barren of scientific results, nevertheless perhaps it enables us to explain this singular belief.

As for the "old wives" of Egypt, they do not order lean women anything else but this.

[1] [The Arabic text has *ttmûs*, for which I read *kimûs* (chyme). I am unable to verify the opinion of Kaufmann. Tr.]

claiming payment. Had it been in the past centuries, people would have retaliated on the "old wife." (May Allah wage war upon Ignorance!)

To protect camels from "envy," an old shoe is hung upon its temple, but I do not know the reason for this.

On the breast of a horse the tooth of a hyena is hung. This old absurdity is the custom current amongst horse-fanciers, of bedecking their steeds with this tooth which they reckon the greatest of ornaments.

On a donkey a wolf's tooth is hung.

Children have put in their hair a piece of *fāsūkh* or *jāwī*, and they hang upon their necks pieces of the bones of the eagle, or of any animal of prey, along with some shells.

It happens sometimes on a day that a milch cow refuses its milk because of some disease or other cause. So the "old wife" announces [p. 98] to them that it is "envied" and orders the placing of its halter in a forsaken grave until the cow gives milk.

As for our discourse on envy, if we suppose it to be true, then what happens daily in the provinces is not of that nature. On the contrary, they are symptoms of various diseases such as we have previously diagnosed. In most cases they are marsh fevers which arise from the water-courses and swamps surrounding the villages, and which, in the time of ploughing, are very common, especially after irrigation and the ploughing of the wheat and clover land, owing to the great putrefaction of the vegetable refuse on the land.

As for getting rid of swamps, that is a matter entrusted to the intelligent members of the community who apprehend the destruction of their own health and that of their children. In ploughing it is necessary for ploughmen to take a good square meal before undertaking the work, and to protect their heads from the influence of the sun.

5:Blackman E-5 (1923) 1926 MR13 Fellahin MR13

woman friend, will sometimes carry the child early in the morning to a *zirîbeh* made of *bûs* (dried *dura* stalks) in which the sheep are kept in the field at night. She also takes a knife with her, and, entering the *zirîbeh*, will hand the child over to the shepherd. The shepherd, having placed the child on its back on the ground, will take the knife which the woman brought with her and will place the blunt edge against the child's throat and pretend to cut it. The child will then start crying, upon which the man will remove the knife and return the child to the woman who brought it. It is believed that good angels watch over the sheep, as they are looked upon as gentle animals, and that these angels, on hearing the child cry, will drive away its mother's *karînch* who has caused the illness by clutching at the child's throat. According to my informant, this belief is common all over Egypt.

I could quote many instances of illness caused to children by their mother's *karînch* during this dangerous period of seven years.

That a woman's *karînch* may sometimes perform a kindly action is shown in the following belief. One of the many devices resorted to by a woman whose child has died and who has failed to produce further offspring is as follows. The would-be mother will lie down between the lines on a railway track, remaining in this position while the train passes over her. One of the reasons given for this practice is that when a mother is thus frightened her *karînch* will come to her with the soul of her dead child and cause it to re-enter the mother. This implies a belief in reincarnation, and I have obtained further information which points to a definite belief in rebirth. For an ancient example of belief in reincarnation reference may be made to the well-known Tale of the Two Brothers.[1]

The following is a translation of the written charm worn by an expectant mother who has reason to fear harm being done to her offspring by her *karînch*. The charm is obviously Coptic, but it is used by Muslim mothers as well as those professing Christianity: "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for He is a great Lord who created the seen and the unseen things; He whom we cannot see with our eyes, and with whom no evil will dwell; who also knoweth well all things that will happen in the future; to whom all the angels cry, saying 'Hallowed be Thy Name'; from whom all evils fly away; who is praised by all things in the Heaven and all the earth, for He is a mighty Lord. Oh, mighty God, I ask Thee to protect N.N., who is carrying my protection, and protect what is in her womb, and him whom she will nurse with her milk, from the evil *karînch*, for the sake of Thy mighty ring (*i.e.* the charm square)."

The probable meaning of the square is, so I was told, "Go on Gabriel, go on Michael, go on Raphael, go on Suriyal, go on Maniyal, for the sake of our Mighty God, and burn this *karînch* in the fire." These are said to be the words of King David. (Pl. XIV, Fig. 3.) ?/n

[1] Petrie, *Egyptian Tales*, ii, pp. 16 ff.

?/n [See category 116, plate facing P. 168 -- Analyst]

/83 cont'd/

(c) Coptic and Islamic spirits: 776

1. Christian: "El-Nasrani" or "El-Dēr", i.e. the monastery
2. Moslem: "Si-Yousef" and "Umm-Nagdi"

Strictly speaking they are not really Coptic or Islamic spirits, because religion has nothing to do with it; we can only classify them thus, because of their names and the characters attributed to them.

There are still some Sultans which cannot be classified at the moment. Further investigation may prove that they belong to one of the above groups. These Sultans are "Katu" (8) and "Rinah".

As related before, the possessed person usually consults the Kūdiya who determines the special spirit in possession of the patient and performs a Zar in order to soothe this spirit. The offerings must be made different according to the kind of spirit. They can be summarized in the following three items: 755 782 [791]

(a) Sacrifices of birds, fowls or animals: The Sudanese Sultan requires a black sheep, a black he-goat, or two pigeons of reddish or dark blue colour. The Sultan of the Jinn demands a red cock, a red hen and a red calf. Sultan Rinah must be given a red he-goat and the Gabalawi a red rabbit, a calf or a deer from the mountains. The Arab again desires a camel etc. [825]●

(b) Clothes of different kinds of material, shape and colour must be worn during the dance of the Zar-ceremony. In a Zar celebrated for the Sultan of the red Jinn, red silk clothes, red veils and a red head covering must be worn by the possessed person. For the Nasrani spirit a priestly black costume is needed. The Sudanese Sultan Zar necessitates a head-cover knitted with cowries and blue stones, a belt, bracelets worn on the upper arm and on the leg just above the ankles, and a stick all covered with cowries and blue stones. In the Sa'idi Zar a galabiah (men's gown in Egypt) and a stick are needed. For the "Askari" or "Lewa" it is best to employ a military uniform or cap, a stick in lieu of a gun, and green or red ribbons. For the "Arabi" bedouin clothes are needed etc. 755 292 776 [301]

(8) In Sudan there is a Sultan called "Kaltum bint Nub" i.e. Kaltum the daughter of Nubia.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

15.

X539
825

The Baby Gazelle.

The gazelle is for the Arab, the prototype of tenderness and beauty. Its pasture is the stony desert ground. Who is not reminded of:

"Shoe the horse and shoe the mare,
But let the little colt go bare!"

Gidy-il-ṛazal, ya aulad,
sāriḥ wara-mmato,
sāriḥ bala markūb,
ḥefyit rigalato.

The baby gazelle, my children,
Goes behind its mother, to the pasture;
It goes to the pasture without any shoes,
With little feet bare.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

119.

The Door and the Lover.

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832
342

Ya bāb, ʾul-li ʿala auwil meṣāḥibetak,
ya bāb, ʾalbi inšabak miʿ ḥubbê ṣāḥibetak,
ya bāb, ana kuntê gāi-lak maʿ ṣiyaḥ ed-dīk,
ya bāb, ana kuntê nāwi aḫlaʿak warmīk,
ya bāb, ana kuntê nāwi aḫlaʿak, sibtak.
Ma ʾal-li-l-bāb: Ḫalli el-ʿaʾl sākin fīk,
wiš yiʿmil el-bāb, lamma ṣaḥbo gāfik?
Ma ultê: Ya bāb, gāk ḫafsê bi-muftāḥak,
ʿiyūn ḥabībi terāi min bīn ilwāḥak.
Ma ʾal-li-l-bāb: Wana mā-li taʿtibni,
wiš yiʿmil el-bāb, lamma ṣāḥibo zāḥak?
Ma ʾultê: Ya bāb, dana ḍaiyaḥtê ʿalê māli,
u-lē ma ʾābilt el-gamīl ḥadri u-ḥu-māli,
ʾul-lo, ḫalli yūfi il-miʿād!
Illi ʿalê siʾān ṣauwamni ʿan akl ez-zād.
ʾasamēn u-billâh, we-ṣōm el-ʿām yilzamni,
in ma-ḥtaḍā-li-b-uaṣlo ʿasakkano il-alḥād!

"O door, tell me for thy former friendship's sake!
O door, my heart is entangled in love for thy mistress.
O door, I was on the way to thee before the cock crowed. [805] [825]
O door, I intended to lift thee from the hinges and throw thee on the ground.
O door, I intended to lift thee from the hinges, but I have left thee."
What the door said to me: "Let reason dwell in thee!

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

764 ing, a long row of straw mats and carpets is laid, on which
152 sit many men silently smoking their chibooks. Some men and boys, connections of the departed, run to and fro on the street uttering cries of grief and covering their faces with their hands. "Oh, my father," they cry (or "mother," "brother," &c., as the case may be), "Oh, my sorrow, my death; oh, despair; oh, my strength; oh, camel of my house" [825] (camel as a symbol of strength or support). Friends show their sympathy and attempt to give consolation, but even men, [562] at other times so undemonstrative, weep loudly and give themselves up to grief. What, then, is to be expected of the women, with their more easily excited feelings? They put on the dirtiest dark-blue dresses they can find, loosen their hair, and display their breasts, smear these and their faces with filth, pluck out their hair and tear their own flesh in a frenzy of grief. All order ceases, the loud outcry is raised again and again by the mourning-women hired for the purpose, and those who come to give consolation and show their sympathy go beyond the real mourners and join the hundred-voiced chorus. It was customary among the ancient Egyptians, [171] and also among the Jews, to indulge in these loud lamentations, to smear themselves with filth, and to hire mourning-women. The Prophet strictly forbade it, but the Egyptian women will not let themselves be deprived of these ancestral methods of expressing their grief.

764 Scarcely have the eyes of the beloved dead been closed and his head turned towards Meccah, when preparations are begun for getting the corpse out of the house. The ancient Egyptians, on the other hand, retained the body at least seventy days in the house for the purpose of embalming it, before it was placed in the tomb. All the former repose and dignity of the Oriental are now gone; beside the dead body are found only loud despair and headlong haste. The doctor [693] or corpse-inspector is first sent for before waiting for the first traces of the phenomena of death, and he must give permission for the burial of the body while it is yet warm. Other messengers have already purchased the linen for the shroud, while outside, the grave-digger is already preparing the last